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Important Information about COVID-19 and Research Participation

At the University of Maine our primary responsibility related to research is to protect the safety of our research participants.

COVID-19 is the disease caused by the novel Coronavirus, which has become a global pandemic. We want to provide you with important information about COVID-19, and to tell you about ways your study participation might change because of COVID-19 related risk.

If you are considering joining a study at this time or are currently enrolled in a study, **it is important that you consider the following information to determine if study participation is right for you at this time.**

How is COVID-19 spread? The virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) is thought to spread mainly from person to person, through respiratory droplets and aerosols produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, or talks loudly. These droplets can land in or on the mouths, noses, and eyes of people who are nearby and these are routes of a new infection. Transmission, or spread, is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (less than 6 feet is thought to be the highest risk). It is also possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object (such as a doorknob or counter surface) that has the virus on it, then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. SARS-CoV-2 can be released from people who have the virus and are contagious, but show no symptoms.

Can COVID-19 be prevented? Current ways to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 include “social distancing” which is a practice to decrease the potential for direct exposure to others who may have been exposed to COVID-19, for example by avoiding large gatherings or refraining from shaking hands with others. Physical distancing, or maintaining at least a 6-foot distance from other people, especially when indoors, is also important. It is important to understand that since study participation may include increased travel outside of your home and increased exposure to others within a clinical care environment or research site, it may increase your exposure to COVID-19. Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth mask or face covering when around others (see UMaine’s current mask guidance for specifics). And remember that you can spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick. Please note that wearing a mask is not a substitute for social or physical distancing.

At this time there is no vaccination to prevent COVID-19 infection.

What are the risks of COVID-19? For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Currently it is not possible to predict who will develop severe outcomes from COVID-19, including cases that require hospitalization. Even young and otherwise healthy individuals have been hospitalized with this disease.

COVID-19 is a new disease and there is limited information regarding risk factors for severe illness. Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, **older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions (such as cancer, diabetes and lung disease) might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.**

We are learning more about COVID-19 every day; we suggest you visit the [CDC website](#) or the [WHO website](#) for more information about the virus.

How could your participation in this research change as a result of COVID-19? There are several ways we try to minimize your risk. If possible, we limit the number of times you have to come to a research site. We ask every research participant if they have the symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in close contact with anyone who has or previously had a confirmed or likely case of COVID-19 before they come to the lab. During your research visits, we try to reduce the time you are exposed to other people as much as possible, especially in indoor settings. We thoroughly disinfect equipment and surfaces after each participant. We ask that you wear a mask (and in some cases gloves) to protect people from exposure.

The information related to risks of COVID-19 changes every day. The leaders at the University of Maine are monitoring these risks and deciding how these risks should change our research. If you have questions about COVID-19 and your participation in research, please talk to your study team.